

Sparling Hotel
Third Street North
Great Falls
Cascade County
Montana

HABS No. MT-75

HABS
MONT,
7-6 GREFA,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SPARLING HOTEL

HABS No. MT-75

Location: Third Street North
Assessor's Block 310,
Lot 6 and South half of lot 7
Great Falls, Montana

Present Owner: Richard Dzivi
2008 5th Street North
Great Falls, Montana 59401

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of
Significance:

The Sparling Hotel is a significant cultural resource as a contributing structure to the potential downtown Great Falls historic district and for its association with A. Frederick Sparling, a prominent Great Falls businessman, and George H. Shanley, a prominent Great Falls architect.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Date of Erection: 10 July 1905; front addition 4 January 1913.

Architect: front addition - George H. Shanley

Historical Narrative:

The Sparling Hotel was built in 1905 for A. Frederick Sparling.

The Sparling Hotel has served as a hotel throughout its life. The building contains forty hotel rooms with four rooms in the basement. The front addition was completed in 1913. Fire escapes were added in 1955. The building has been vacant for several years.

Biographical Information: A. Frederick Sparling

A. Frederick Sparling (1863-1929) was born at Orillia, Ontario. He went to Calgary, Alberta where he earned his living operating a meat market. While in Calgary, he became the friend of H.P. Brown, president of the Great Falls Meat Company, and worked for Brown after arriving in Great Falls. Sparling purchased the Peoples Meat Market on Third Street South. He sold the meat market in 1910 and turned his interests to operating the hotel.

Sparling served on the volunteer fire department and on the park board. A Democrat, he was appointed County Commissioner during the fall of 1928 to fill out the unexpired term of County Commission chairman, Joseph A. Barker. However, ill health forced Sparling to resign before Christmas of the same year.

Sparling married Lucy Frances Bowers in 1899. They had no children. He was a member of the Masons and Odd Fellows.

Biographical Information: George H. Shanley.

George H. Shanley (1875-1960) was born and raised in Burlington, Vermont and attended the University of Vermont. He came to Montana in 1898 to help his father construct a barn near Glacier Park.

Shanley was active in Democratic Party politics and was elected as an Alderman from the Great Falls Fourth Ward in 1918-19. He was elected to the Montana House of Representative in the fall of 1936 where he served one term. He was appointed to the State Board of Architectural Examiners in 1918 by Governor Sam Stewart. Shanley served many years as president of that board. He was also a member and president of the City of Great Falls Planning Board for many years.

The following is a partial listing of the buildings in Great Falls designed by Shanley: Independent Telephone building; Washington School; State Deaf and Blind School; Rainbow Hotel; First National Bank; the new Park Hotel; Liberty Theatre; Johnson Hotel; Strain Building; Falls Hotel; Buttrey Building; Rocky Mountain Fire Insurance Building; Cascade County Jail; Forest's Garage; Barber-Lydiard Building; Ursuline Academy; St. Thomas Home; Columbus Hospital; Central High School; First Avenue North Bridge; Tenth Street Bridge; the Country Club Towers and the original Meadow Lark Country Club clubhouse; State Fairgrounds buildings; Dunn-Brown Block; YMCA; the Blackstone Apartments with Henry Hall Johnson; and the Civic Center with Johannes Van Teylingen. Shanley also designed buildings throughout Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming. Representative examples include: First National Bank and Federal Reserve Bank buildings in Helena; numerous banks along the High-Line; the Finlen Hotel in Butte; the Baxter Hotel in Bozeman; several Catholic Churches; and many schools. He was also designer for the Army Winter Training Camp at Yellowstone National Park. His offices were in the First National Bank building after it was constructed and then in the Barber-Lydiard Building after it was constructed.

Shanley was a member of the Arlington Club, the Elks Lodge, the Knights of Columbus, Meadow Lark Country Club, and American Institute of Architects among many fraternal and civic organizations.

Shanley was married to Inez about 1906. They had four children, one of them adopted: George, Junior; Frank; Boland ("Bo"); and Jerry. Bo and Jerry are still living. Frank was in business with his father as an architect at the time of his father's death. Bo worked in construction and then as a supervisor of the construction projects of his father and brother.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Information

1. Architectural Merit and Interest: The Sparling is of architectural merit based on the integrity of the facade.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good (to be demolished)
3. Summary Description: The Sparling Hotel is a three-story rectangular building with a basement. Its design and exterior materials are characteristic of multi-room structures built during the first part of the twentieth century. It is thirty-nine feet wide and ninety-nine feet long. The front addition to the building, which is associated with Shanley, comprises thirty-seven feet and ten inches of the length of the structure.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior

1. Foundation: The foundation is concrete-covered cut stone.
2. Wall Construction: The walls are of stretcher bond brick, darker in the front portion than the rear. The front portion has detailing of light-colored terra cotta, which marks the water table and belt beneath the third story windows. The roof is built up with a stepped parapet with terra-cotta coping ridge and a blocky extended terra cotta cornice. The roof of the rear portion has a five-step parapet, which is capped with a double row of stretchers.
3. Structural Systems: Iron frame.
4. Porches, Stoops, Etc.: Not applicable.
5. Openings, Doorways, and Windows: Windows in the front portion are one-over-one double hung with white stone terra-cotta sills and flat, brick lintels. In the back area, windows have stone slab sills and lintels. The front entry is located in the central of three bays and faces east. The door is boarded over, but is it surrounded by an arched recess of terra cotta. A neon sign extends over the sidewalk, and "SPARLING" is located between terra-cotta stones above the arch. Simulated piers extend along the length of the front facade on either side of the windows and are topped with pseudo-capitals of terra cotta which meet the lower frieze of the entrance.
6. Roof - Shape and Covering: The roof is flat and covered with composition asphalt roofing.

C. Detailed Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: There is no entrance lobby. The front door opens on a straight hallway extending directly west into the building. A dozen rooms face the hallway. The stairway, which has been partially dismantled, is on the north side of the hallway. The same floor plan exists on each floor. The basement contains four rooms and a museum and writing room.
2. Stairways: It is made of oak.
3. Flooring: The flooring is fir strips about one and a half inches wide. It has been covered with carpet throughout.
4. Wall and Ceiling Finishes: The walls and ceilings are of lath and plaster composition.
5. Doorways, Doors, and Windows: Transom windows exist over many of the doors.
6. Interior Trim: Oak trim is used throughout the building.
7. Hardware: The dumbwaiter gears and equipment are in a moderate state of disrepair.
8. Mechanical and Electrical Equipment: The building uses radiated steam heat. It has modern electrical lights and vintage plumbing. The fixtures appear to be vintage in the hotel rooms.

D. Site and Surroundings

1. Orientation and General Setting: The Sparling faces east on Third Street North. North, south and west of the structure are parking lots. Northwest is the two-story brick Rolland Apartment House. Southwest is the Great Falls Main Post Office. Residential houses lie to the north. The business district is to the south.

PART III. SOURCES OF PROJECT INFORMATION

Plans call for the demolition of the Sparling Hotel in 1989. The historical documentation of the Sparling Hotel was completed by Gar C. Wood & Associates, Inc., in August 1988. It is one portion of the historical/architectural recordation of the Sparling Hotel prepared for the U.S. Postal Service that also includes photodocumentation. The recordation conforms with the standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior.

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